



SGB-FSS
Schweizerischer Gehörlosenbund
Fédération Suisse des Sourds
Federazione Svizzera dei Sordi

Eva Hammar-Bouveret, Chief, Media Department, Swiss Federation for the Deaf

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the representatives of the [Universal Esperanto Association, defenders of linguistic rights](#), for inviting me to come and address this Forum in the name of the Swiss Federation for the Deaf.

To briefly introduce myself: my name is Eva Hammar-Bouveret, I am deaf since birth and I work at the Swiss Federation for the Deaf. I express myself in sign language, a language that gives me access to information and training, thanks to my sign language interpreter.

Sign language was prohibited for more than 100 years (1880-1980) in Europe. One of the consequences is that currently the general level of education of deaf people in Switzerland is less than the average. Deaf people do not always have access to information and training equal to that of hearing people. Consequently, not many deaf people participate in the political life of their country, and currently there are no deaf people who have been elected to public functions.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights foresees that every person has the right "to take part in the conduct of public affairs of his/her country" and to have access "under conditions of equality, to the public functions of his/her country." The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also recognizes this right of each citizen not to submit to discrimination and to be able to participate effectively in political life.

Moreover, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 December 2006, sets out more clearly that the right of people with disabilities to be able to exercise political rights equally with hearing people must be guaranteed. Indeed, here is an extract from Article 29 of this Convention: "Participation in the political and public life" clearly stipulates the obligation of the States Parties to guarantee to people with disabilities the enjoyment of political rights and the possibility to exercise them on an equal basis with others.

Concretely, this means that deaf people should have the possibility - equal to that of hearing people - to participate actively in political life, to vote and to be elected to public functions, all this in a language which is totally accessible to them, such as sign language. This implies that deaf and hearing impaired people should have total access to information and achieve a level of education equal to that of hearing people. This ideal is not yet a reality, there are still many obstacles that prevent deaf people from achieving this equality. However, thanks to the existence of these various texts, we - the deaf and associations for the deaf - remain hopeful that the situation will evolve rapidly towards this ideal.

I thank you for your attention.

About the Swiss Federation of Deaf People (SGB-FSS)

The SGB-FSS was founded in 1946 and it is the key organization for assistance to the deaf and hearing impaired. It is committed to equal rights and opportunities for deaf and hearing impaired people as concerns training, information and employment, society and culture. Deaf and hearing impaired people are best qualified to decide on their own needs. This is why the SGB-FSS employs mainly deaf and hearing impaired people and its branches are also composed mainly of the persons concerned.

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